

PUBLIC HEALTH REPORT

MALCOLM H. MERRILL, M.D., M.P.H.
Director, State Department of Public Health

NUMEROUS INCIDENTS of Salmonella food poisoning outbreaks are on record but it has frequently proved difficult to trace the source of infection. An unusual outbreak due to *S. reading* occurred in the United States in 1956-57. This organism, rarely found before in this country, was suddenly isolated from cases of Salmonella infections in widely separated areas.

A similar picture seems to be appearing now in California, and possibly the United States, with *S. infantis*. The Microbiology Laboratory in Berkeley has been identifying Salmonella cultures by antigenic analysis since 1943. In California *S. infantis* had not been identified before 1954 in man, nor before 1951 in animals.

Human infections identified in 1955 numbered 22, the number increasing each year until 1960, when 116 cases of *S. infantis* were identified by the laboratory through July 8. *S. infantis* has been identified in cultures from 15 counties so far this year, with 40 cases from Los Angeles County, 28 from Alameda County and 13 from San Francisco.

Sixty-five public health specialists participated in observation training programs in the department during the fiscal year 1959-60. They represented 28 countries, including Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, China, Japan, Pakistan, Peru, Singapore, South Viet-Nam, Uruguay, West Indies, and Yugoslavia.

An outbreak of phosdrin insecticide poisoning occurred among workers engaged in aerial crop spraying operations near Bakersfield in June and July.

More than 15 patients were put in hospital and at least twice that many were treated as out-patients for phosdrin poisoning.

Phosdrin is a potent liquid organophosphorous insecticide with a physiological action similar to that of parathion. It is extremely poisonous to animals and man, particularly when absorbed through the skin by contact or through the lungs by inhalation.

Experience has shown that strict observance of specific precautions and safety measures for handling phosdrin is absolutely necessary if the hazard is to be reduced to a minimum.

Investigations by a physician and an engineer from the department's Bureau of Occupational Health, in cooperation with engineers from the Division of Industrial Relations, clearly demonstrated that inadequate observance of such precautions was the primary cause of the outbreak.

At the request of the State Board of Public Health the department will include in its 1961-62 budget a request for funds to finance the beginnings of a traffic accident prevention program in the department.

Injuries from traffic accidents are among the major health problems, and are the leading cause of death among Californians age 15 to 34 years.

The proposed program, which would engage a physician, engineer, behavioral scientist, statistician and health educator, would seek the basic causes of accidents, a fundamental need in the field of traffic safety. Without this information a scientific approach cannot be made toward accident prevention. The epidemiological research techniques so successful in hunting down and leading to the control of communicable disease can be applied to the study of accidents.

The department would work with the medical profession and with local health departments in a review of medical standards for drivers, and in a review of standards for emergency care and transportation of persons injured in traffic.